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Food for thought

by Will Nicholls

It's no surprise that Olivier De Schutter, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, concluded that current food systems are deeply dysfunctional. He said the world is paying an exorbitant price for the failure to consider health impacts in designing food systems.

In his "Report on the special rapporteur on the right to food, mission to Canada," released in March, De Schutter calls on Ottawa to create a national food strategy to fight hunger among a growing number of vulnerable groups, including Aboriginals and people struggling to make ends meet. And De Schutter condemned the Harper government's agenda, claiming it undermined access to food.

Conservative Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq declined to address his observations or recommendations, instead attacking De Schutter as "ill-informed" and "patronizing."

But politicians' insults do not feed hungry people. "First, in order to effectively combat hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition, it is necessary to have a comprehensive understanding of who is hungry, food-insecure and malnourished," De Schutter's report said.

First Nations and the Inuit know quite well who in their communities suffer from hunger. In this, the report hits home. The report raises concerns about Canada's Aboriginal population. Many find it surprising as appeals to the UN by First Nations for changes to national and provincial policies in the past have fallen on deaf ears. What De Schutter found is that hunger and malnutrition problems are not disappearing. On the contrary, "The Special Rapporteur was disconcerted by the deep and severe food insecurity faced by Aboriginal peoples living both on- and off-reserve in remote and urban areas."

De Schutter is not alone in his conclusions. Diana Bronson, executive director of Food Secure Canada, said, "There are over two million people in this country who are severely or moderately food insecure. Hunger is rampant in many Native and northern communities and government policies have not yet adequately addressed the issue of the right to food in Canada."

An investigation by the Food Banks Canada organization found that one in 10 of the 851,014 people who relied on food banks across Canada in 2011 were Aboriginal.

Despite that, the UN report has not met with productive reaction from those in power. Conservative MPs, including Citizenship and Immigration Minister Jason Kenney, said it was a waste of UN money to investigate a developed country like Canada.

The NDP responded to the Conservative dismissals by urging the government to create a national food strategy and make more of an effort to improve food security issues for First Nations, Inuit and Métis across Canada.

Research shows that a 10% tax on soft drinks, which have such negative health impacts, could lead to an 8% to 10% reduction in purchases of these beverages. Cree and other northern communities know that while basic food prices are much higher, the cost of unhealthy foods such as pop and chips are usually the same as in southern Canada. This ensures the poorest segment of the population often rely more on unhealthy food sources.

De Schutter said it best in his report: "Taxpayers pay for misguided subsidies that encourage the agrifood industry to sell heavily processed foods at the expense of making fruits and vegetables available at lower prices; they pay for the marketing efforts of the same industry to sell unhealthy foods, which are deducted from taxable profits; and they pay for health-care systems for which non-communicable diseases today represent an unsustainable burden."

It is time for a change that ensures no one is without healthy food. Three Canadian aid groups that have worked for years to alleviate poverty and suffering overseas are launching projects in First Nations communities in Canada. And that is a sorry state of affairs for a country that – undeservedly – enjoys such a great international reputation.

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Zanab Souit from Chisasibi

photo by:
Isabelle dubois

Fifteen minutes later...

by Sonny Orr

One of the many talents I learnt from some very smart people is that time has values. Time for this and time for that both have different values, but in all cases, time has some sort of face value. Time is precious it turns out and it's the way you manage your time that counts the most.

For example, if you had the time to do one thing or another and one favoured some quiet time with the family and the other had checkers or card playing or some sort of extracurricular activity that goes on these days, which would you choose. If you had to make a choice, then you have some value to that time for this or that. If you had to take time off to do the household chores before hanging out at the movie theatre or some hangout and then go hang out, is that good time management? When does homework fit in?

There's a time for everything, but some people just can't keep up with the times, literally. For example, good time managers can get their morning workout, cup of coffee, shower, and rush out the door with a toast hanging from the side of their mouth and slurping java at the same time and are never late for work. Then you get these slouches who show up late as usual, then have a coffee break, then take off on errands, which by the way, never seem to end. Where's the chore-boy when you need him? Finally, on Friday afternoon, you get to talk about the job at hand and then it's time for the long weekend. What time is it?

Lately, I've been trying to keep up with the times by making use of every minute of my life so I can have more time for the things that I value the most, like hanging out with family or just living life without stress or phone calls ringing in the background all the time. This makes up for the times that these most valued times are set aside for making money, doing business and such.

Time is an important part of life, as it seems that humans don't seem to care for it much, as it is too short for many and too long for others. For many people I knew who have passed on, some had not used their time well, but still, I value those times with them. So, it seems that the past times, the present times and even the future times have meaning and value, which paradoxically, have no price to pay for, just memories.

So for all those who can't manage their time well to date, perhaps they might do better tomorrow and there is always the hope that they will spend their time well. I, for one, learnt this a long time ago, in a seminar worth a credit to my long list of credits, and from this session, I knew that my day had to change. So these days, I manage my day by turning this human into a management machine, then by turning off again at five o'clock, just in time to meet my family in human terms. Time is precious and you never know what could happen in the next 15 minutes.

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A huge step forward for health care

Mistissini's new Miyupimaatisiiun Centre is open for business

by Will Nicholls

Crees take pride in seeing their communities grow and Mistissini is no exception. Seeing a needed addition to your community is a pleasure when it fulfils a basic necessity like health care.

The local clinic had become too small to handle Mistissini's population growth and the community's health needs. The Miyupimaatisiiun Centre is a new mini-hospital that will help correct this situation. For example, many Cree remember the walk to fight for local dialysis treatment of Cree diabetics. Patients would have to go to Val-d'Or or Montreal for treatments and the high costs were a financial burden on many families. The walkers raised enough money to buy two dialysis machines, which went to the Chibougamau hospital.

Lately though, Crees were having a hard time obtaining treatment in Chibougamau. A hemodialysis unit that is part of the new centre will help alleviate this problem. Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come said it was important to bring Crees home. Given that almost one in four Crees are diabetic or have symptoms there is a need for this service.

There will also be a fully equipped laboratory, radiology facility and a pharmacy. It's a far cry from the haphazard health care Crees received in the past.

Bella Petawabano, chair of the Cree Board of Health and Social Services (CHB), looked back to the 1920s, when a doctor would travel to the community by canoe in the summer to conduct annual check-ups.

"In 1942 a log clinic was built, and one or two nurses came each summer while the people were in residence," Petawabano added. Later, a second clinic was built that provided health services five days a week. But, "if there were emergencies, people were flown out to Roberval, or later to the new Chibougamau hospital." In the 1980s, another clinic was built to provide expanded services and an ambulance service.

"This centre brings our community healthcare facilities closer to those enjoyed by people in the rest of Quebec," Petawabano stated with pride.

She also pointed out that, in addition to modern services, the centre respects traditional Cree healthcare. One aspect of that is the cedar house that "will provide a space for reflection, consultation with Elders, and traditional Cree healing, and it reflects our determination to draw on the strengths of our Cree heritage in forging a healthy future, one where we all experience and share in miyupimaatisiiun."

On hand for the opening were Quebec's Health and Social Services Minister Réjean Hébert, Social Services and Youth Protection Minister Véronique Hivon, Aboriginal Affairs Minister Élizabeth Larouche and Ungava MNA Luc Ferland.

"Since 1975, under the agreements between our government and the Crees, Quebec has offered many opportunities for collaboration," Larouche said. "Mistissini Community Centre is a concrete example. It reflects, once again, the government's willingness to consider the features associated with the culture and lifestyle of the Cree."

Cree participation in the administration of health and social services "is a good illustration of our nation-to-nation relationship," she added.

Hébert pointed out this visit was his first time in Mistissini and said he was impressed by the respect Cree had for the Elders and their wisdom. "This is a model for people everywhere," he said.

The minister said they were trying to establish a council of Elders in other communities in Quebec and this is a way that Crees are having an influence in the rest of Quebec. Hébert was also aware of the problems with diabetes and felt the new centre would be beneficial for Mistissini.

A video featuring Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come's full speech at the opening ceremonies is available on the Nation website: nationnews.ca

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A Grand Elder's sacrifice

Raymond Robinson holds a hunger strike for nation-to-nation talks

by Akiva Levitas

Manitoba Cree Grand Elder Raymond Robinson ended a five-day hunger strike April 9, but not before visiting Concordia University to explain the message behind his fast.

He introduced himself to the group of students and journalists at Concordia April 4 by shaking their hands and offering a kind word before he began telling his story. "I'm just a common man from the northern Cree territory of Cross Lake, Manitoba. I've lost children. I've lost grandchildren. I'd like to leave my children and grandchildren the same thing I'd like to leave for yours. And that's a better a future."

Robinson went on a hunger strike to call for Prime Minster Stephen Harper to initiate nation-to-nation negotiations would be held concerning treaty rights. Another action Robinson was calling for from the government was to remove certain provisions in the First Nations Communities Funding Agreement and Bills C-38 and C-45.

The funding agreement includes a provision that would force First Nations to abide by all existing and future provisions, which leaves them in a difficult position when mounting challenges in court. "I try my best to fathom this idea this government is trying to take us into but at what price," he asked.

During his talk, Robinson chose a young woman from the crowd to stand next to him and hold up a coin before asking, "We've all come to this point in life where we have to ask what is more important to preserve, this money or this young lady?

"Over the past 40 years, it has always been a one-sided affair where the government has been saying, 'I know what's good for you. You don't tell me what's good for you.'" The message he is sending to the people of Canada is that First Nations need to stand as equals and no longer be relegated to being political talking points.

Robinson's April hunger strike was a continuation of his earlier attempt with Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence last year at achieving action on the part of the federal government concerning Aboriginal rights. Before taking on this current venture, Robinson spoke with Chief Spence, who gave him her blessing but expressed her concern over this difficult and dangerous action. But that didn't stop concerned people in the audience to plead with Robinson to at least drink some liquids. After a brief pause where the emotions ran high in the room, he smiled and responded, "I love you brother."

On April 5, Robinson met with federal Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt. "It didn't really go anywhere," Robinson said of the encounter, during which Valcourt laughed off his request for a nation-to-nation meeting. But not everyone in Parliament is so quick to turn a deaf ear; Manitoba NDP MP Niki Ashton had a lengthy phone conversation with him on April 7.

The fast Robinson held was a spiritual one; he spent his days praying for the First Nations and the Crown to meet on equal footing. "As a Grand Elder, I have a duty and an obligation to always live by the sacred teachings that have been handed down by the First Elder, our Creator," Robinson said in statement posted on the day before he ended his fast. "I pray for this world to aspire to work together."

For more news and video of Robinson, visit our website, nationnews.ca

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Élizabeth Larouche
Ministre déléguée
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Bon *Goose Break* !

Le printemps est arrivé et avec lui, le fameux Goose Break. Pendant une dizaine de jours, le peuple cri d'Eeyou Istchee se consacre à la pratique de ses activités traditionnelles et renoue avec ses coutumes ancestrales. Ce sont sans doute des journées très précieuses passées en famille à vivre des expériences qui s'imprègnent dans les mémoires des petits comme des plus grands. Je vous souhaite un séjour en pleine nature qui soit énergisant, des températures douces pour en profiter pleinement et bien sûr, une excellente chasse à l'oie.

Happy Goose Break !

Spring has arrived and with it, the famous Goose Break. For a dozen days, the Crees of Eeyou Istchee dedicate themselves to the practice of traditional activities and return to their ancestral customs. These are doubtless very valuable days, spent with your family, living experiences that create unforgettable memories for both young and old. I wish you an energizing stay in the wilderness, mild temperatures to fully enjoy it and, of course, an excellent goose hunt.

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Branding Eeyou Istchee

Eeyou Istchee Tourism, Tourisme Baie-James and the Cree Outfitting and Tourism Association unveiled a new brand image for the region. Launched at the Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Centre April 8, the new marketing campaign is placing the spotlight on Cree heritage and the region's vast tract of wilderness in hopes of attracting more tourists.

Branding the region Eeyou Istchee Baie-James, the new logo features the slogan, "Escape Like Never Before." The brand is aimed at bringing people from around the world to enjoy the rich cultural heritage of the Cree along with the area's many opportunities for outdoor activities. The promotional video highlights numerous activities that can be done in the region, like wind skiing, canoeing, hunting, fishing and snowmobiling.

The three agencies behind this brand are encouraging businesses to start using the new branding when dealing with tourists.

For more info: www.teibj.com

CSB's new location in Montreal

The Cree School Board officially opened its head office for Post Secondary Student Services at a new location at 1440 St. Catherine St. in Montreal. The grand opening took place March 28 with numerous students and friends present for the event.

With so many universities and trade schools in Montreal, the new location will continue serving Cree students who move to the city to pursue their post-secondary education. The mandate of the service is to provide the beneficiaries of the JBNQA with the tools to help them successfully complete their education

Pssst...

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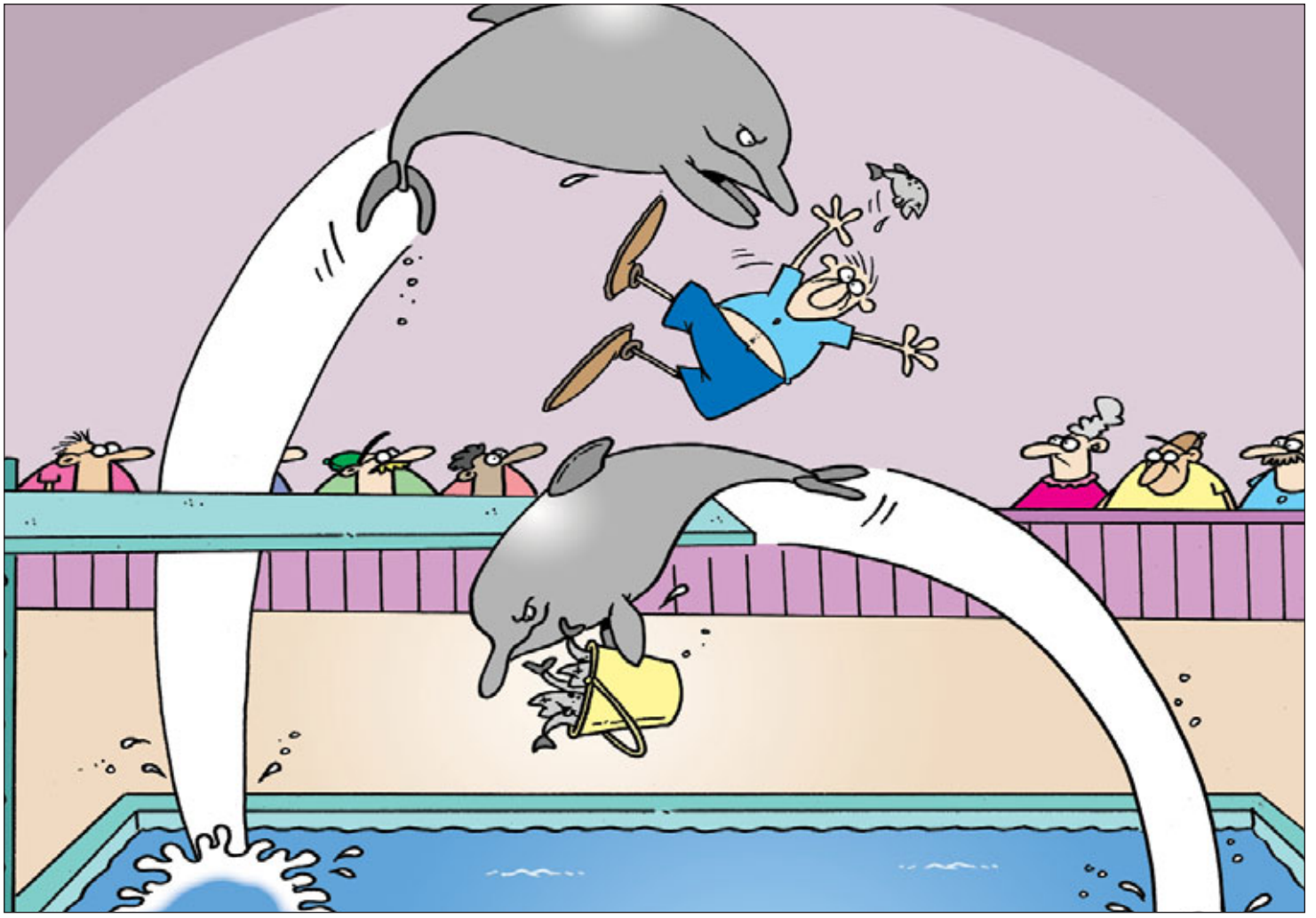

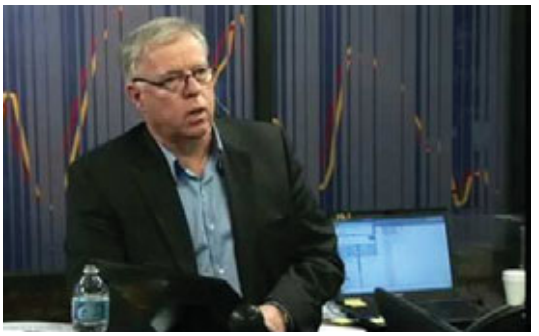

Strateco's Guy Hebert

"WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE AND FOR NO GOOD REASON, NEITHER RATIONAL NOR SCIENTIFIC, THE GOVERNMENT HAS CHANGED THE RULES. THE MINISTER'S ATTITUDE IS BOTH IRRESPONSIBLE AND UNPRECEDENTED."

The half-life of the uranium battle

Moratorium far from the final word on the Matoush project, says Strateco

by Amy German

While many Crees and environmental activists throughout Quebec may be celebrating the Quebec government's decision to impose a moratorium on uranium development pending a provincial study, Strateco Resources Inc. is making it clear that the company isn't throwing in the towel just yet.

On March 27, Quebec Environment Minister Yves-François Blanchet announced that a moratorium would be imposed while a provincial environmental review board (BAPE) exhaustively reviews the uranium mining issue. The move halted all work on the Matoush uranium project in the Otish Mountains, on which Strateco has already invested $120 million.

Obtaining the go-ahead from the province was the last step in a years-long process for Strateco. The company has already been given the green light from a provincial review committee, a federal review committee, the federal Minister of the Environment and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC).

Strateco was quick to denounce the decision to impose a temporary moratorium.

"In addition to overlooking the recommendations of his own review committee, the minister has also completely ignored the CNSC's expert opinion," Strateco

Crees welcome moratorium

The Quebec government puts the brakes on uranium development

by Akiva Levitas

Is Quebec ready to take on the risks of uranium mining? That is what the provincial environmental review board (BAPE) is trying to find out. Quebec Environment Minister Yves-François Blanchet unveiled the process on March 28 in Montreal.

The Grand Council of the Crees (GCC) welcomes the moratorium but is calling on the provincial government to properly respect Cree rights enshrined in the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA).

"An independent and broad study of the uranium industry is urgently required," said Deputy Grand Chief Ashley Iserhoff. "It is good that Quebec has halted all uranium exploration and mining activities while this process is on-going. However, we unfortunately cannot support the process as it is currently planned."

The GCC discussed the moratorium with former PQ Environment Minister Daniel Breton and other provincial officials last fall. "It was something that was talked about," said Mistissini Chief Richard Shecapio. "The Crees have their own environmental regime under the JBQNA, and we want to make sure it is respected."

Many First Nations communities, non-Native municipalities and grassroots organizations in northern Quebec have expressed concerns about the long-term effects of

president Guy Hébert said in a press release. “These internationally recognized experts have all concluded, without exception, that our project is safe.”

In recent months Strateco has complained that Quebec has dragged its feet on making a final decision on the project. For that reason the company filed a mandamus petition through in Quebec Superior Court to force the provincial government to speed up the decision process. Strateco claimed that the government has neglected to make a decision for over two years.

The company is now looking into challenging the legality of the moratorium because the Superior Court has not yet had the opportunity to rule on Strateco’s mandamus petition.

"Without prior notice and for no good reason, neither rational nor scientific, the government has changed the rules. The minister's attitude is both irresponsible and unprecedented,” Hébert stated. “We will use every means available to protect our company and our shareholders. We will not stand by in the face of such an arbitrary and unjust decision.

After the Easter holidays, just days after the moratorium was announced, Strateco’s stock price tumbled 60%, reaching an all-time low.

Strateco spokesperson Denis Boucher, of National Public Relations, said this setback hurt the company but that it does not mean the Matoush project is dead.

“What the government did was to create enormous prejudice and damages to the company and therefore we have to make sure that the rights of the shareholders and the company are being protected and defended,” said Boucher. “We will fight for our rights and we are going to make sure that our rights do not get overlooked.”

Boucher said it was his understanding that both Strateco and the Cree were unhappy because the government does not have the jurisdiction to impose a BAPE process on the project.

He added that the company is interested in the Cree position on the BAPE given that the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement contains provisions that override this provincial environmental review body.

Boucher said the main focus right now is to ensure that Strateco’s rights are upheld since Quebec’s call for a BAPE has been detrimental to the company.

“The ministry is not going to issue certificates for exploration or exploitation projects anywhere in Quebec until the BAPE issues its report. I looked for an agenda for the BAPE but there isn’t any. This means we don’t

Deputy Grand Chief Ashley Iserhoff

“IT IS GOOD THAT QUEBEC HAS HALTED ALL URANIUM EXPLORATION AND MINING ACTIVITIES WHILE THIS PROCESS IS ONGOING. HOWEVER, WE UNFORTUNATELY CANNOT SUPPORT THE PROCESS AS IT IS CURRENTLY PLANNED.”

uranium extraction over the past several years. Opponents to uranium extraction are calling for a permanent moratorium across the province similar to the one that the US state of Kansas has implemented for 30 years.

There has been nothing to indicate that Mistissini Cree First Nation will change its position against uranium development in its territory. Having already participated in federal, provincial and independent review processes that were specific to the Matoush project, Mistissini will present its case to the BAPE process, which will examine the province-wide effects of uranium mining.

“This kind of mining is not welcome by our people,” said Shecapio. “We’ve made it clear back in November 2010 when we first announced our position. With a moratorium in place, it allows Quebec to really engage the company to examine the possible impacts with regards to uranium mining.”

However, the community is making it clear that it is not against development. “Our people supported the mine operations that took place in the 1990s and early 2000s,” Shecapio said. “It is something we foresee having benefits in terms of economic development and employment.”

All uranium development activities are on hold until the BAPE review process presents its results. “At this point we’re not just talking about a ramp project, which was the case with Matoush, this one is the whole operation itself –

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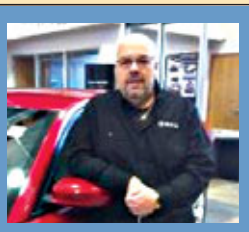

Richard Michel, Sales Manager

I personally wish all the Cree people a happy and safe Goose Break.

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know when the BAPE is going to come back with the report. There is no deadline and no clear parameters.

Strateco's position is that it has cleared every regulatory hurdle and that it is manifestly unfair to now impose a BAPE review, which it sees as a delaying tactic.

"We have followed every single step that we were asked to follow: to go through public hearings, to conduct environmental studies, to go up in front of the provincial review committee and the federal review committee, to get approval from the federal Minister of the Environment and to gain approval from the CNSC. All of those steps were followed and respected and we obtained favourable reviews from all of those bodies and all of those experts," said Boucher.

Boucher emphasized that Strateco is still willing to work with the Cree, and remains committed to clearing uranium's "bad" reputation. According to Boucher, there is a lot of "misinformation and false assertions circulating about this ore," and most of which he said is both unbelievable and irresponsible, particularly in the area of nuclear bomb making.

Boucher added that while Quebecers are lucky to have an abundance of hydroelectricity, not everyone in the world does and so the need for nuclear energy, and other products such as medical isotopes, remains.

"What is important to know is that there are very safe ways to explore and exploit uranium and this is what the experts, and I underline the word experts, have determined," said Boucher.

from exploration to mining," Shecapio observed. "The biggest question now is what do we do with the waste?"

The damage to the surrounding environment caused by the waste produced from the mines needs to be assessed because of its long-term impact to the area's ecosystem. The soil, rivers and wildlife would be most affected by the mine waste, which has an estimated radioactive life span of about 1,600 years.

Quebec is still figuring out the exact method and schedule for the review process. At the earliest, the BAPE will probably hold review panels in the fall.

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State of the arts

Crees share and discuss artistic endeavours at the CNACA festival

by Amy German

While there are artists and artisans throughout the Cree nation who embody the culture, spirituality and uniqueness of the Cree arts scene, looking at them in terms of social infrastructure is a whole other story.

According to Lloyd Cheechoo, the executive director of the Cree Native Arts and Crafts Association (CNACA), the artistic spirit in the Cree community is alive and well and CNACA has plans to support it.

This was one of the many subjects discussed at the 2013 CNACA Festival in Val-d'Or March 16-17. CNACA not only held showcases for Cree performers, but also offered workshops, seminars, an art symposium and an awards show for the who's who of the Cree arts world.

In total, Cheechoo said over 50 individuals attended the event besides the performing artists and many representatives from various boards that the Cree are trying to tap into for funding to support the Cree artistic community.

The first part of this is assessing just who is out there and what their needs are. To do that, CNACA has in recent years worked with the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec (CALQ) and the Cree Regional Authority to perform an assessment of artists, their needs and their place within the economy of Eeyou Istchee.

According to Cheechoo, CNACA's job is to provide information on its members. To this end the association distributed a questionnaire to help CALQ compile a database on Cree artists. These creative people who work in a wide range of arts, such as traditional arts, craftsmen and musicians.

Among the many questions asked were some that looked at where the Cree artists and artisans practice their trades and what resources exist within their communities.

"The foundation arts study looked at the needs of the artists in terms of developing an arts infrastructure in the Cree nation. What was revealed is that we are at a ground zero. There is no infrastructure and so we have to address their needs in terms of funding, acquiring cultural centres or studio spaces for our artists," said Cheechoo.

While promoting traditional and contemporary Cree arts, the artists and their products was primary goal of the event. According to Cheechoo, CNACA also had other interests in Val-d'Or that it was pursuing. Showcasing the goods allowed for the group to make some valuable connections at the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue because one day the university might be able to support Cree artists through education seeing that the development of a fine arts program tailored for Crees is one of CNACA's long-term goals.

But, the best way for artists to get the support they need in the Cree nation is for them to earn an income doing what they love. As Cheechoo explained, this is something that CNACA would like to continue to focus on, but there has been some difficulty in doing this in recent years.

While CNACA is supposed to handle the merchandise to be sold in the boutique at the Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute, much like the now defunct Watchyia store in Val-d'Or many years ago, the inventory of Cree products for the shop has yet to materialize.

According to Cheechoo, CNACA was unable to get the $300,000 grant that was needed to open up the boutique. At the same time, many of the master craftsmen who previously sold their wares through Watchyia have moved on. While problems from the original store led to issues with supply-and-demand, he said for many Cree artisans their trades have become hobbies instead of full-time jobs.

"The number of full-time artists we now have is getting lower and these people are getting older," said Cheechoo.

Looking at the market for Cree products, Cheechoo said CNACA knows that those actually making crafts cannot keep up with the demand within the Cree nation. While this is good for the artists, it hinders the further marketing of crafts because the craftsmen can only make so much.

This made things difficult when it came to creating a new store to sell goods on behalf of the artists.

An internal market study done by CNACA that looked at who was making what and where it was going showed that within the Cree nation, many Cree artisans were being commissioned by the major Cree entities and the band offices.

"What we determined was that our arts people are actually quite busy and that's why we were no longer receiving

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a supply/demand anymore as they already had their own market within the Cree nation. They didn't need to go outside of the Cree nation to do business and the projection of how much money was being spent on these project was around $100,000," said Cheechoo.

So, not only were the Cree master craftsmen already working, according to Cheechoo, they were being well paid. The demand for their work is high enough that they never had to just make crafts to sell but would instead be filling specific orders.

Cheechoo stated that because these artists and artisans have been selling their own wares for so long, they don't need groups like CNACA.

"We are supposed to be the advocate of the artists and members of CNACA, which is everything to do with their pricing, representing them and their rights. But, it doesn't work that way.

"They don't communicate that often with us and these craftsmen are getting older and they are Cree so they are not in the habit of calling that often and talking to us about business. It is their business and many of them don't want us involved. They have a niche market and they want to keep it to themselves," said Cheechoo.

On top of that, Cheechoo explained that many of the master craftsmen have their distinct styles that are their trademarks that they don't want copied. For that reason, many of them aren't open to training others.

At the same time, he said there have been many members of the Cree nation who have been vocal about how Cree culture shouldn't be for sale.

With all of this in mind, Cheechoo said that CNACA had found other ways to serve the rest of the Cree nation while helping those craftsmen and artists who wanted the representation they could offer.

One way is working in the field of healing arts via the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay to provide traditional practices training. This would be part of the Nishyiiu projects geared at helping individuals who want to reconnect with traditional identity, which is part of the ongoing work the Health Board does to deal with the legacy of colonization and the residential school system.

Cheechoo said that CNACA is also in the process of working on a website encyclopedia of Cree traditional crafts, tools and culture to promote traditional teachings and cultural identity. This project would include things like traditional hunting tools, the preparations for them, their uses and then the different kinds of crafts Crees made with them, thereby creating a tangible reference guide to Cree history.

"We had to evaluate where we stood with these obstacles of exploitation and commercialization of our culture, not just the arts and crafts. We started to look away from the product but if you look into the Cree nation of today it is all about Cree cultural identity," said Cheechoo.

At the same time, a new generation of Crees are finding themselves through

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art both traditional and contemporary. While some have become nationwide successes like Cree musical sensation, CerAmony, who have won major national awards, others, like famed visual artist Jimmy Tim Whiskeychan, have become household names throughout Eeyou Istchee.

And then there are lesser-known artists who are just starting out or have been practicing their crafts as a hobby, like Paula Menarick of Chisasibi and Sam Mianscum of Mistissini.

For Menarick, making traditional clothing like walking-out outfits and beaded earrings is a labour of love that has been passed down from generation to generation in her family.

Menarick said she started sewing when she was about seven or eight years old as she comes from a family with a strong backbone of craftsman skills. Many of her teachings came from her grandmother, mother and aunts though she learned how to make other crafts like moccasins and mittens at school

"As I learned these sewing skills, it has taught me many traditional teachings of the woman's role as a Native person. Many stories and legends have been passed on to me through my teachers. It has taught me patience, respect and creativity. I make these traditional items to keep them alive just as our grandmothers have. People use these crafts for traditional ceremonies but they don't know how to make them or don't have the time, so I make them," said Menarick.

She now wants to pass on these traditions to her daughter, Creelynn, to help keep Cree culture alive.

She said that CNACA has been a good support in terms of artist representation and in helping her find new clients and so her membership has been valuable.

Sam Mianscum fell into traditional craftsmanship almost by accident, when he wanted to own a pair of traditional snowshoes. A musician by trade, Mianscum decided that it would be better to learn how to make a pair of snowshoes than to buy them. When he investigated how to make them, he discovered that the process required a crooked knife.

"I wanted to buy one, but I thought that I should make one so that I knew how to do it," said Mianscum.

While researching this process, Mianscum approached several Elders in the community to be trained, but he wound up just getting rough notes dictated to him from different relatives and experts. Through trial and error, Mianscum said he wrecked about 20 different metal blades before he finally got the knack for the knife-making process. From there he moved on to working on handles.

When he finally felt that he had something worthwhile to show, he took the knife to the older Crees in his community and left it with them for inspection.

"When I returned a few days later I was pleased with what they told me. One of them, my uncle, said that they were among the best he had ever seen," said Mianscum.

Now CNACA is trying to help Mianscum sell his knives.

For more info: www.cnaca.ca

THIS NOTICE HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE QUEBEC SUPERIOR COURT OF JUSTICE

The Mistassini Hostels have been added to Schedule F of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement ("IRSS Agreement") for the period of September 1, 1971 to June 30, 1978.

To all who resided at the Mistassini Hostels in Northern Quebec between September 1, 1971 and June 30, 1978

BE ADVISED that the Mistassini Hostels have been added to the list of "Indian Residential Schools" under the IRSS Agreement for the period of September 1, 1971 to June 30, 1978. Justice Rolland of the Superior Court of Justice has ordered that former residents of the Mistassini Hostels who resided there during the period of September 1, 1971 to June 30, 1978 are eligible to apply for compensation in the form of a Common Experience Payment (CEP). As well, those former residents who suffered sexual and/or serious physical abuses, or other abuses that caused serious psychological effects while at these hostels, may apply for additional compensation under the Independent Assessment Process (IAP).

All **CEP** applications relating to the Mistassini Hostels must be filed **on or before September 2, 2013**. All **IAP** applications relating to the Mistassini Hostels filed **on or before September 2, 2013** will be considered to have been received by September 19, 2012.

This Notice extends only to applications relating to residence at the Mistassini Hostels. ***It does not alter the existing deadlines under the IRSS Agreement in place for other eligible Indian Residential Schools.***

For more information on both processes, please call toll free, 1.866.879.4913, or go to www.residentialschoolsettlement.ca to read the Settlement Agreement and other Court approved notices, or write to Residential Schools Settlement, Suite 3-505, 133 Weber Street North, Waterloo, Ontario N2J 3G9. The IRS Crisis Line (1.866.925.4419) provides immediate and culturally appropriate counselling support to former students who are experiencing distress.

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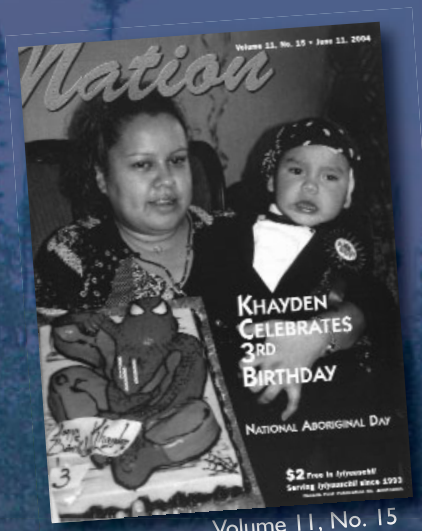

July 11, 2004

Volume 11, No. 15

NEWS

Crees ready to establish national police force

A new Cree Nation police force could be taking its oath of service in 2005 to finally bring policing in all of Eeyou Istchee under one command. It's the culmination of a long-awaited implementation of section 19 of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement and new policing provisions in the Paix des Braves.

The political significance of a new, national force could be immense. "Policing is an icon, a symbol of sovereignty and control over your territory," said Bill Namagoose, Executive Director of the Grand Council of the Crees (GCC).

Under a new agreement, which is still in the planning stages, the GCC would get more control over provincial highways that run in and around Cree communities. Quebec is ready to sign the deal, but up until this point, negotiations with Canada have been moving at a snail's pace. Both Canada and Quebec are responsible for Cree Nation policing under the JBNQA.

When the Paix des Braves was signed between Quebec and the Crees Feb. 2, 2002, the Cree were allotted an extra eight constables to patrol the nine communities. The number of police officers in Eeyou Istchee went from 47 to 55.

"This goes back to section 19 of the JBNQA," said Namagoose. "There were supposed to be Cree units of the Quebec police force. We couldn't agree what that meant. Quebec wanted them to be hired by the Sûreté du Quebec and be separate from the local community police. Canada said we couldn't have both, so we went with local policing and the Cree unit issue was left outstanding."

The GCC still feels they are entitled to these "Cree units," but will give them up in exchange for a Cree Nation police force, which would fall under Cree control instead of the SQ. "Instead of having nine separate police forces, we'd have one," said Namagoose.

It's hoped that through negotiation that the new force will have a much larger area to cover and full jurisdiction over that area. This includes highways and other places not already patrolled by the SQ.

The new agreement would also ensure better, more enhanced training for the new officers and consistent directives for veteran officers. They would also have new uniforms. Showing up to police a public event in nine different uniforms doesn't look very professional, Namagoose remarked.

The annual budget for policing would increase by $1.3 million when the new agreement is signed, up to $8.7 million. Those figures would include funding for an additional 10 police officers.

Some of the ideas floating around for those officers and their duties include: an inland captain and a coastal captain, a police director and a police commission. There would also be a major crimes unit, and a victim assistance program, as well as a public relations officer. None of these ideas are set in stone as the logistics have yet to be negotiated, said Namagoose.

They will also look at the possibility of a 911 service for all of Eeyou Istchee

"The best part about an agreement like this is the young police officers can climb the ladder to advance their careers. Right now they can't do that," said Namagoose. "Also, some police officers feel uncomfortable that they have to patrol their cousins. This way an officer from Nemaska would get a chance to patrol in a bigger town like Mistissini," he said.

The Grand Council will be informing the people over the next few months as to what they can expect with a Cree Nation Police Force and what changes will be made that will affect them.

The current policing agreement expires March 31, 2005.

Covers from Vol. 11 series

COUNTDOWN TO 20TH.... 14 ISSUES LEFT

Nation 20 1983-2013 flashback

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Happy Goose Break in Eeyou Istchee

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Budding scientists

Science fair attracts talented young Aboriginals

by Annie Cloutier

photo by Karine Soares

Zainab Souit

photo by isabelle Dubois

Summer-Harmony Twenish and Shirleen Dunn with their tomato project

What can I do to avoid bacterial growth in my poutine? What do smokers' lungs look like? How can I grow tomatoes in Chisasibi? How can I make low-cost speakers? These are some of the questions that provided starting points for the science projects of Eeyou Istchee students who participated in the Quebec Aboriginal Science Fair held in Kuujjuaq last month.

More than 100 curious and resourceful kids, aged 10 to 16, flew to Kuujjuaq to attend the annual science exhibition March 18-20. They came from 30 communities, including Whapmagoostui, Mashteuiatsh and all Nunavik communities, except Tasiujaq. Held at the Jaanimmarik School, the event was organized by the Quebec Aboriginal Science and Engineering Association (QASEA) in collaboration with the Kativik School Board. Chisasibi and Wemindji communities were also well represented.

Summer-Harmony Twenish is Cree and a vegetarian. Not an easy lifestyle choice in Chisasibi. "Good vegetables are hard to find here. And even when you do, they do not last long. They are expensive too," said the 16-year-old student.

Since the growing season is very short, and gardening accordingly difficult, Summer-Harmony tried to find a way to solve the problem. With her partner, Shirleen Dunn, she prepared a science project called "What's 'Tohmatoe' With You?" to study if vegetables can be grown indoors. To show how easy sustainable gardening is, Summer-Harmony got hold of a small $1 growing kit consisting of peat moss that puffs up when watered. "We planted beans and it's already got green stalks growing. We had them under a lamp to give them light. It was simple," she explained.

Summer-Harmony has participated in science fair since she was in Grade 5. "My mom wanted me to do it because it helps

PUBLIC NOTICE

Please take notice that **ELECTIONS** for the offices of **Grand Chief/Chairperson and Deputy Grand Chief/Vice-Chairperson** of the **Grand Council of the Crees of Eeyou Istchee and the Cree Regional Authority** has been called.

The schedule for the elections is as follows:

ADVANCE POLLS: **To be determined.**
ELECTIONS: **July 15, 2013.**

Nominations for the Positions of Grand Chief/Chairperson and Deputy Grand Chief/ Vice Chairperson are now open.

The qualification for eligibility to vote and to participate in the elections is as follows:

a) To be a Cree beneficiary in the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement.
b) To be of the age of majority at the date of the elections (18 years of age on July 15, 2013).
c) Not to be affected by any legal incapacity.

Any nomination for candidacy must be duly made by ten (10) eligible voters, as prescribed in the attached nomination forms for both positions, in order to be declared a valid nomination by the Chief Electoral Officer. No one shall or sign a nomination for more than one candidate for either position.

The deadline for submission of the nomination forms is at **5:00 p.m. on Friday May 24, 2013**. Please be advised that nominations received after the posted time will not be accepted.

The nominees will have until **5:00 p.m. on Friday, May 31, 2013** to inform the Chief Electoral Officer whether to accept or decline his/her nomination.

The nomination forms can be obtained from the Local Returning Officers that have been appointed by the Chief Electoral Officer as per the attached schedule or from the office of the Chief Electoral Officer at:

Lawrence Jimiken
Chief Electoral Officer.
c/o Cree Nation of Nemaska,
32 Michistaauyau
Nemaska, Quebec
J0Y 3B0
Tel: (819) 673-2512 ext. 204
Fax: (819) 673-2542
Cell: 819-865-7094
E-mail: lawrjimi@hotmail.com

in presentation skills and you've got opportunities to travel and share your ideas and learn about new things and other people's projects."

For Zaïnab Souit, also from Chisasibi, speaking in public was not at all an issue. The confident 11-year-old student attracted a large audience with her exhibit consisting of two real pig lungs. "Seeing the other school kids smoking on break time, I was wondering what their lungs looked like," she said.

So with the help of pig lungs (borrowed from her school) and a pump, Zaïnab, who is of Moroccan origin, showed how smoking affects respiratory function. Her presentation had at least one positive effect: "A visitor told me that she would quit smoking," she said, proudly. Kevin Happyjack-Belanger and Dylan Saganash from Waswanipi, for their part, studied the effects of chewing tobacco.

Agriculture and biology were only a few of the wide range of topics explored by the students. Along with exhibits that had a northern or Aboriginal flavour (like making soap with seal fat or explaining the Northern Lights), exhibitors also showed projects reflecting teens' interests.

Kevin Happyjack-Belanger

Music was a part of it. Stacey George and Surina Meeko, two Cree-Inuit sisters from Whapmagoostui, made speakers with Styrofoam plates, magnets and wire. Whereas Marie-Alice Tremblay was more concerned about bacteria that could propagate in food, especially in poutine. Inspired by a scientific quiz on TV, the Grade 6 student from Wemindji decided to verify the results of a scientific experiment by attempting to reproduce them. After checking the internal temperatures of food in various situations, she was able to determine that the best way to prevent the growth of harmful bacteria was to cool it rapidly in the fridge in an uncovered vessel. Using her artistic talents, Marie-Alice made real-looking poutine with clay and special glue. So many visitors touched it, that it was surely full of germs, by the end of the day.

"I SAW VERY BRIGHT KIDS WHO COULD PURSUE CAREERS IN SCIENCE OR OTHER FIELDS. I SAW FUTURE ABORIGINAL LEADERS."

According to Marc Lalande, President of QASEA, "2013 was a very good year. These kids are really sharp."

Dr. Stanley Vollant, the first Innu to become a surgeon in Quebec, attended the event as a guest speaker. "I saw very bright kids who could pursue careers in science or other fields. I saw future Aboriginal leaders."

The top three students of each grade were given awards. Zaïnab won the first prize in the Secondary I category. Along with three Kuujjuaq students – Lukasi Tukkiapik, Jeremy Davies and Anne Sequaluk – she is also part of the Grand Winners of the entire Science Fair. These students will represent Quebec Aboriginal people, among the 500 best Canadians, to take part in the Canada-wide Science Fair in Lethbridge, Alberta in mid-May.

For more info on the science fair: www.esaquebec.ca

photo by isabelle Dubois

John Pien and George Bacon from Kawawachikamach

photo by isabelle Dubois

Stacey George and Surina Meeko from Whapmagoostui

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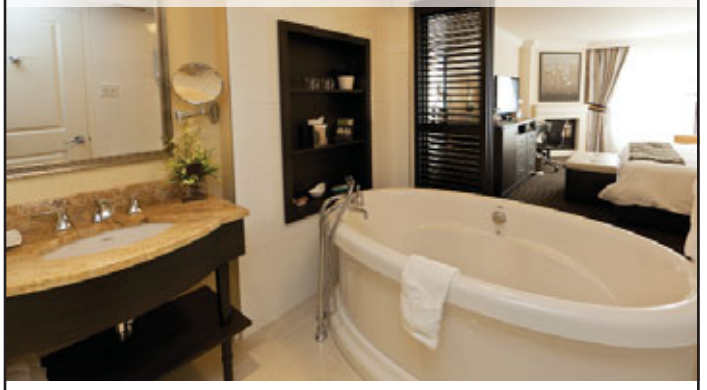

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Winning words

Story by Eleanor Cowan Photos by Shelby Isaac

"My true goal is to be a pilot," shared Sec. I student Michael Mark at the 25th Annual Public Speaking contest held in Wemindji on April 4. "When you get back on the ground you can still feel the greatness of the sky." Michael also told a crowded house that he'd love to have a family one day, and that he'd "be there" for them all of his life.

With the largest turnout and the highest participation ever seen, 29 students from Maquatua Eeeyou School shared their dreams and ideas as proud parents, grandparents, cousins, teachers, friends and neighbours listened in rapt attention.

The event organizers, Cree language teacher Theresa Kakabat Georgekish and Cree history teacher Carmen Faries, attribute this year's exceptional number of student speakers to the Cree School Board's increased curriculum emphasis on oral presentation.

"All teachers have been asked to integrate oral expression into every aspect of academic life. Perhaps what we are seeing tonight are the results of that educational mandate," said Georgekish. "In addition, I am really happy that our Grade 3 and 4 students participated in the Cree language category of this contest. I am so proud of them."

Faries, whose warm smile reassured each student who approached the stage to speak, noted that the event is an excellent opportunity for students to present themselves to their community. In turn, the community learns what the youth are thinking about and who they are becoming. Faries said that public speaking is a skill that develops over time. Students become adept with practice and public speaking offers opportunities for students to become involved.

"Funny, I can play hockey with my team in front of a crowd at the arena for hours on end, but standing in front of a lone microphone all by myself for 10 minutes is a whole different ball game," said one rather drained participant after the event.

"I could not possibly be more proud of my class," enthused English teacher Sylvia Sampson, adding that her students Wanda Miniquaken, Tanner Lameboy, Michael Mark, Hannah Hardisty and Jewel Blackned wrote their speeches entirely by

Dominique Hudon, Marie Alice Tremblay, Jessika Danyluk

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From the Niskamoon TEHQ Program Students to the people of Iyiyiu Aschi,

We wish you a safe and plentiful Goose Break!

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Our world is a changing one and we recognize this. We are at an important turning point with one foot stepping lightly into the acceptance of the modern world and the other foot firmly rooted in the traditions of our parents, grandparents, and ancestors.

We are proud to be students representing the Cree Nation. But mostly, we are proud to be Iyiyiu and proud to have the honour and privilege to hunt with our families during this spring season. We hope that many of you will also be joining your families and friends on the territory. Please be safe on the roads and waterways!

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themselves. "This is exciting because independent work is the true mark of accomplishment."

Sampson, a teacher at Maquatua Eeyou School, observed that part of the accomplishment of public speaking is in dealing well with feelings of exposure. "It's because our students handled that vulnerability with confidence, that they deserve our admiration," she explained.

Following a lengthy evaluation process, judges chose Grade 2 student Keanu Atsynia as the first-place winner in the elementary level. He spoke about Saturn, his favourite planet because of the many rings around it. First-place winner at the secondary level was Samuel Robertson. His speech, liberally laced with humour, centred on the idea of Wemindji 100 years from now – with battery-run geese radar tracking devices, solar-powered automatic hunters, and finally, more seriously, Quebec becoming a First Nations-run country all of its own. The audience loved it!

At the close of the successful evening, Maquatua Eeyou School Principal Rose Marie Farago congratulated every student and thanked Faries and Georgekish for organizing such a high-impact community event, one that brought pride and pleasure to our school and to the Cree Nation of Wemindji.

Winners: Jayda Gilpin, Aramis Miniquaken, Kree Sky Danyluk, Sydney-Mark Erless and Carmen Faries (organizer and convener whose warm smile to each student melted their fears)

Mike Mark, Samuel Robertson, Emilia Gilpin, Leslie Mayappo

Below is the list of proud Maquatua Eeyou winners of the 25th Regional Public Speaking Contest:

Cycle One Category:

1st place winner:
Mary Jane Miniquaken
2nd place winner: Nikita Mayappo and Morgan Stewart (a tie)
3rd place winner:
Billie Mistacheesick
People's Choice Award Winner:
Nikita Mayappo

Cree Language Category:

1st place winner: Delilah Stephen
2nd place winner: Hailey Georgekish
3rd place winner: Kyla Georgekish
People's Choice Award:
Hailey Georgekish

Cycle Two Category:

1st place winner: Jessika Danyluk
2nd place winner: Dawn Murdoch
3rd place winner: Keanu Atsynia
People's Choice Award Winner:
Keanu Atsynia

Cycle Three Category:

1st place winner:
Dominique Houde
2nd place winner: Justin MacDonald
3rd place winner:
Marie-Alice Tremblay
People's Choice Award Winner:
Marie Alice Tremblay

Secondary School Category

1st place winner: Samuel Robertson
2nd place winner: Tanner Sabbe
3rd place winner: Emelia Gilpin
Secondary People's Choice Award winner: Mike Mark

Nishiyuu's epic journey: Kitigan Zibi

Story and photos by Ernest Webb

Matthew Natachequan of Whapmagoostui did the prayers and sang songs for the walkers as they started their day.

Rosalind Sam, Chisasibi, started in Eastmain

I'm happy to walk. I was happy when we walked the land, Cree land, when we used snowshoes. We're treated very well when we reach different communities. It's my first time doing this. I wanted to help them and I want to help myself.

Merlin Kanatewat, Chisasibi

I've done walks many times now, but this is hard when we walk on the pavement. Our feet don't hurt when we walk in the bush.

Benjamin Capsissit, Oujé-Bougoumou, started in Pikogan

It helps me to clear my head when I walk, seeing nature. I like meeting new people and going to new places.

I joined the Journey of Nishiyuu in Kitigan Zibi, the Algonquin community near to Maniwaki, Quebec, on March 21.

I made my way to the community centre, where most of the walkers were being served breakfast. What struck me about the walkers as I entered the centre was how young many of them were. It seemed that a new generation was now taking responsibility for the future and doing something about it.

I could tell who had been on the walk since James Bay by how worn and soiled their signature white tunics were. The white tunic is based on a design that people wore long ago and most of the walkers were sporting them. Most of the tunics were made by mothers, aunties and grandmothers in a mad rush as the walkers joined; some had tunics sent to them as they made their way to Ottawa.

Many of the walkers were vets of earlier walks that started a few years ago in Eeyou Istchee and their biggest complaint was how hard it was to walk on pavement.

The journey added about 30 walkers in Kitigan Zibi, bringing the total to nearly 300.

Many knew the hardships of the journey while others had yet to learn of the pain on the feet, ankles and knees that each step brought. The people I spoke with said the pain was a small price to pay compared to what they were walking for.

The new friendships that developed could be seen as they talked and laughed their way through breakfast. A lot of them expressed regret that the journey would soon be over and they would have to leave their new family.

The ones with the crisp new tunics did not know what lay ahead, but they tackled the challenge with smiles and laughter.

Johnny Mianscum, Oujé-Bougoumou

I'm trying to help anybody on the journey and trying to get the message across, especially for unity among nations. I was excited when I left home, then I got here and now I'm ecstatic. We usually get a warm welcome from the locals. They welcome us with open arms, good food and a warm place to stay. They cover everything we need, so there is nothing to complain about. We expect a warm welcome in Ottawa just like ones in every other community.

Marissa Wawatie, Tyanne Ratt-Decoursay, Rosie Keyes

Marissa: I'm walking for my future and for other people's future

Tyanne: I'm walking so we have a better future and I'm representing my community Barriere Lake.

Isaac Kawapit, guide from Whapmagoostui to Chisasibi

Robert Ottereyes snaps photos for Facebook. He was on the support crew for the walkers.

Wynonna Ratt

Mona Tolley, Sue Thran, Mandy Commonda, Karen Buckshot

Mandy: The biggest thing we've had to organize was the food. We started feeding them when they left Rapid Lake and we will continue to feed them. Food is one of the biggest things to organize. Now we're working on organizing their baggage.

Shania Papatie, Lac Simon

Pearl Bosum, Oujé-Bougoumou

I felt pumped when I first started. The first few days were really tiring. I was really tired. It was fun though. There are a lot of things I've been learning as I walked. Going to other reserves I learned a lot of things and I learned languages too. I will remember the singing and dancing, the pow wow. We were welcomed in each territory and I'm thankful for the hospitality we were shown. The places where we stayed and suppers we were invited to.

Rusty and Bella Mianscum, Oujé-Bougoumou

I was only supposed to watch at first. But then we were asked to join and we agreed right away. We're meeting new friends and we're treated well along the way. I will miss my new friends once this is over.

Philip Rupert, James Loutitt, Albert Icebound

James: I worked as a roadrunner. When my ankle was sore I had to get up real early and we were usually the last ones to get to sleep. Walking on the pavement is hard though. It really hurts the feet. But as a roadrunner you're constantly working.

Jerry Wabanonik, Lac Simon

Hydlo and FRIENDS unplugged

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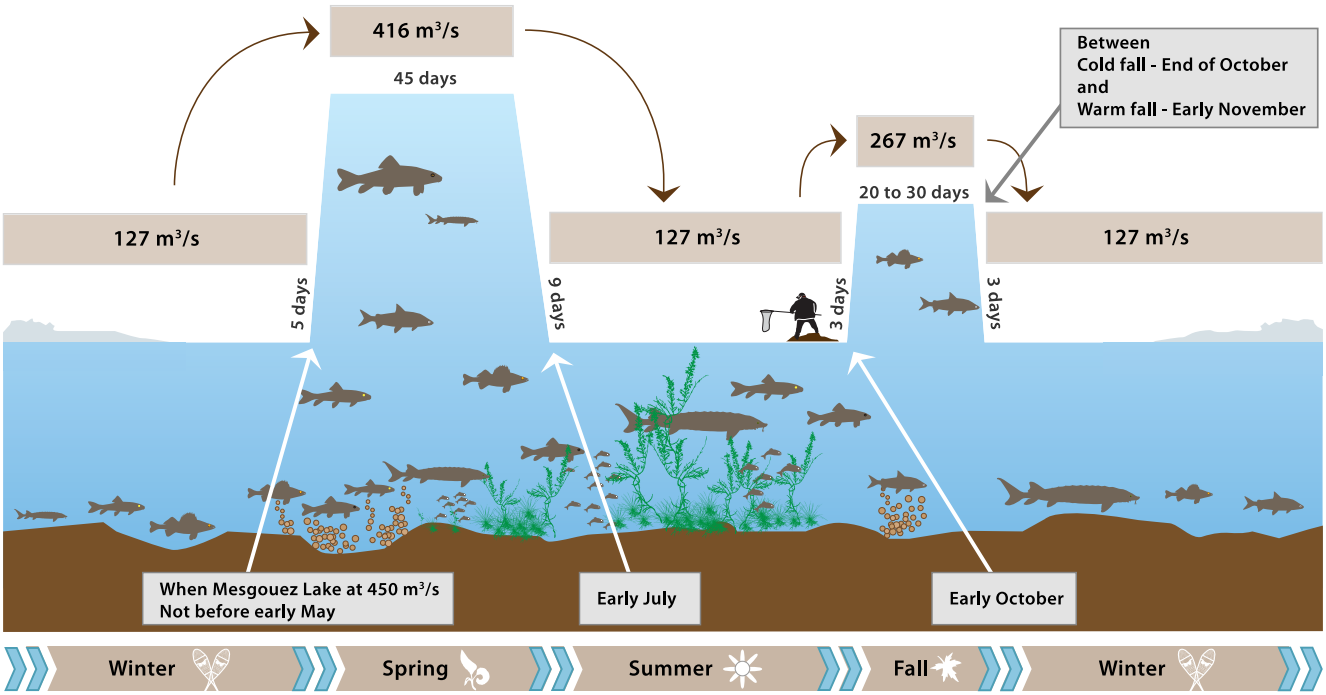


The Rupert river flows downstream of the Rupert Dam. As for the past three years, Hydro-Québec will be increasing the amount of water released to support spring spawning beginning in early May.

An instream flow released year round through the spillway gates contributes to ensure Hydro-Québec maintains its commitment to preserve fish habitat and the river's continued use hunting, fishing, trapping and boating.

Rupert River Water Management Board

The Board oversees the respect of the Ecological Instream Flow regime. The Board counts two Cree members: Mr Lawrence Jimiken, representing Nemaska and Mr Thomas Hester, representing Waskaganish as well as Mr Bryan Craik, representing the Grand Council of the Crees and the Cree Regional Authority.

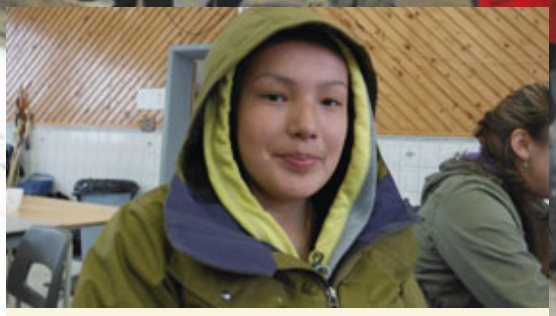
Hydlo and Friends is a radio show broadcast on JBCCS. Its hosts Luke MacLeod and Luc Duquette discuss the environmental follow-up activities related to the Eastmain-1-A/Sarcelle/Rupert project, as well as the concerns of land users with regard to Hydro-Québec's facilities and activities.

Next show:
Wednesday, May 15, at 8:00 a.m.

For more information, visit www.hydloandfriends.com

Adrienne Shecapio

I'm excited. Yesterday when I got here I was a little bit nervous because I didn't know how the group was. Everyone is so nice and friendly it already feels like family. These people from Oujé they helped me so much, they encouraged me to join. I wasn't very sure at first. I've been watching them for a long time and I've wanted to join the walkers, but I couldn't because I was working. Since I got the week off I decided why not. While I have the time, there's no excuse not to. I'm mostly here to encourage the young people who are walking. I'm walking for the young kids who are not able to walk. I have a son and I'm mostly walking for him so that he can walk in his own land as he pleases when he grows up. I'm like his feet right now.



Amy Mianscum, Oujé-Bougoumou

I like meeting new people and especially my (white) coat. I love it. I was scared and nervous, but in a happy mood.

Quill Nottaway, 7 years old

I feel good.

Diane Ottereyes-Reid making sandwiches for the walkers along the highway.

Breakfast at the community centre

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Hindsight isn't always 20/20, but it's close

by Boyce Richardson

I began writing as a journalist in 1946 on a small newspaper in New Zealand. If I ever started out with delusions that being a newspaper reporter gave me, somehow, a large influence of some kind, the sheer facts of newspaper life quickly disabused me of them.

I realized off the top that for the most part only the owners of newspapers – that is, the wealthy, whose interests are always with the conservative elements in society – exercise freedom of the press. Although the press in general may have a lot of influence on people's knowledge, opinions and outlooks, such influence seldom, if ever, rests with an individual worker in that particular minefield. Newspapers use disadvantaged people for their own purposes, and are unconcerned with helping them overcome their disadvantages.

Given these attitudes to the press, perhaps it is not surprising that I should have been so surprised (and flattered) that my work as a journalist and documentary filmmaker is the subject of a few extremely laudatory paragraphs in the foreword to the book Home Is the Hunter. The author of this foreword, University of British Columbia Professor Graeme Wynn, writes that my journalism and later work in relation to the Cree people of James Bay in northern Quebec "was instrumental in reshaping public awareness of (and sympathy for) the plight of the James Bay Cree."

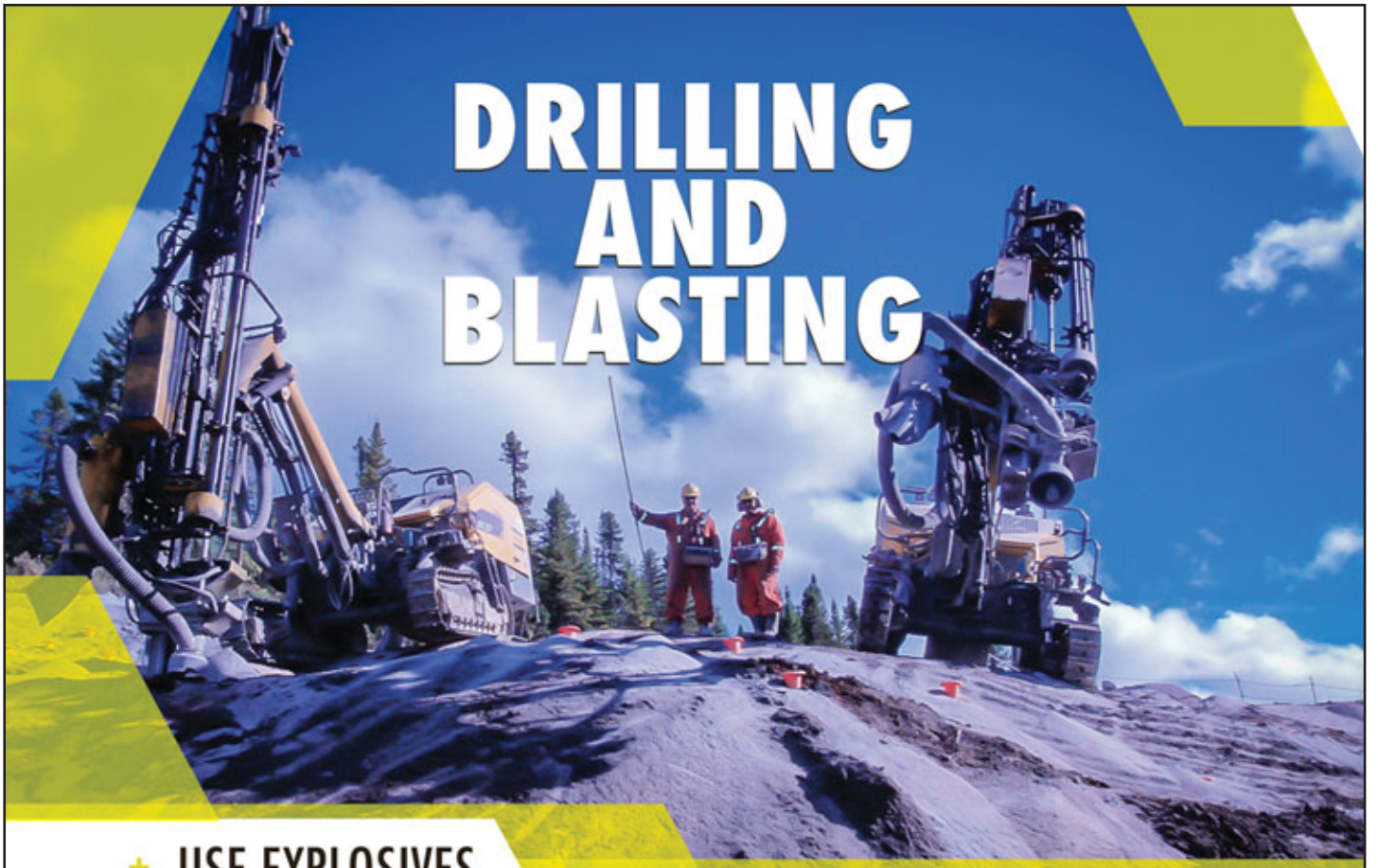
This is no doubt an exaggeration: in any issue of public moment, anyone who is interested puts in his/her two cents worth, and what emerges after it has all been chewed over is the basis for some kind of action, usually not a particularly good or progressive action, but at least action of some kind.

Since the first things I ever wrote about the Cree were in 1969, the fact that someone has commented on my work in such serious tones sort of robs me of my long-time conviction that the primary use of journalism is to wrap tomorrow's fish and chips in.

Nonetheless, this got me to thinking about the period in which I was involved in all this work. I had just turned 40, had plenty of energy, and, as I observed and later researched how the so-called Indians had been treated in Canadian history. I was shocked by the racism, arrogance and ignorance they had had to endure. That kept me going: I thought it worth reporting what I could see with my own eyes and hear with my own ears, and ask Canadian readers if this really was how they wanted these people to be treated.

I never had time to ask myself if I was treating their past in such a way as to make it static, or frozen in time. It was enough for me to know that they had been royally shafted in the past, and that this was continuing into the present day. The people themselves could resolve more abstract questions as to the viability of a hunting culture in modern life. Was there any reason why only a few of them should have been given formal schooling? Why did they have such poor health standards? Why so many living in condemned and inadequate housing? And beyond all these questions of material conditions, more important ones to me concerned the Euro arrogance that had always assumed the Indigenous people lived a way of life that was "barbarous," that their children could only be rescued from this barbarism by being forcibly removed and placed in schools designed to destroy their own languages, their role models and their childhood conditioning. Could anything have been more brutal that this?

I don't think we ever suggested in the films we made that the lives we showed were not taking place in modern Canada. I remember taking my first film into Parliament to show to some MPs. One from southern Ontario, who was slightly drunk, reacted by saying, "Never



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saw so many zippers in my life," as if the fact the Cree hunters had zippers on their pants negated any claim they might make to be following a subsistence hunting existence.

Of course, the presence of a film crew makes a difference to what happens in a Cree hunting camp. When Sam Blacksmith's three families went into the bush in September they knew we would be arriving with our five crew members to film them later in the fall, and again in the winter, so they decided to build themselves a super-sized lodge. We took in nails to help them in this task, and they built the lodge during our three-week September visit, in addition to making the customary inventory of the animals that would be available to them to catch during the coming winter. When we arrived in March, however, they had wisely decided that their three families were living together successfully in the large lodge, and the imposition of five urban Canadians would be unnecessarily disruptive. So they erected a large tent in which we stayed, coping in the Cree way with the 40-below weather.

When we arrived in March they told us they had had a hard time of it, because no big game had come through their territory, and they had had to subsist on fish, rabbits, beaver and other small game. (Mind you, a lot of meat was available to them, even from that source.) We still had the plane that had flown us in, and we asked if it would help them were we to take them up and look around for the moose that could surely not be that far away. So we did that, and when they returned, they agreed that if we took them up again, and dropped them close to the moose, they would try to accommodate our cameraman so that he was able to film their shooting of the moose.

In the event, the hunters, released downwind from the moose, shot off on their snowshoes, leaving the cameraman far behind. When he caught up with them he discovered they had shot and wounded a moose, and were waiting for him so that he could film the coup de grace. They then went about expertly butchering the moose, removing its skin, and packing it on to sleds for transport back to the lodge. In the event, we were able to show in the film the sequence of a moose hunt in mid-winter with almost no change in what would have been their normal hunting methods – except, perhaps, for their wounding the animal so as to wait for our cameraman to film the final shot.

That the Cree used sheets of plastic inside their lodge to defend themselves against the cold was no more than the way they normally acted when no camera crew was present, but quite a few people who saw the film back in urban Canada took objection to their use of a tool that any sensible person in similar circumstances would use.

Sam paddling a creek in the midst of an early snow

I learned a number of important lessons from my work with the Cree. For instance, that knowledge and wisdom does not depend on a university education: the elderly Cree hunters I came to know, however superficially, were men of immense skills, for one thing, but also thoughtful, far-sighted men who had grown up learning that the human species is just one of the forms of life that comprise a healthy environment.

They believed that spirit inhabits every thing in our world – every rock, every tree, every animal and bird and fish. They believed that the animals on which they depended for subsistence gave themselves to them, but would do so only if the hunter respected them by maintaining the rituals for killing, preparing, eating and then caring for the bones of the animals by placing them on stands beyond the reach of predators. They wrapped the bones and placed them on trees, sometimes hanging their skulls from trees, as a sign of respect.

They carried these ideas to such a point that if they did not succeed in the hunt, it was always, in their minds, because of something they had done in the previous year that was disrespectful of the animals which had refused to make themselves available to the hunters.

I also learned to be careful of snap judgments between and about people. Whites who wandered along the streets of Chibougamau could look into the Wachonichi hotel as they passed, and see old Crees lying on the floor after drinking. But these were not drunken bums: these were skilled hunters who, as is their custom, made the most of what was available to them while in the town. But that visit over, they went back into the bush, and exercised their incredible range of skills to keep themselves alive, skills that only a few white men could ever hope to attain.

So these people, many of whom had never been to school, knew so much about the biology of the animals with which they lived in such close harmony, as to outstrip the knowledge gained by white scientists. Yet, when they produced for the governments the profound information they had, the governments at first refused to accept that it was of any worth.

Unlike Hans Carlson, the historian-author of Home Is the Hunter, who has covered almost the entire region on snowshoe and canoe, I never had any wish to be an outdoorsman. When, towards the end of this period, CBC interviewer Peter Gzowski asked me whether I was still nervous in canoes, I was able to reply in a resounding affirmative, adding, "and I always will be."

I will leave it to the academics to place what I have done, if it has any continuing impact, in some kind of perspective. I was lucky to have had the chance to put my two cents worth into such a major question as the future of race relations in Canada, and can only hope that the results after the subject has been chewed over by everyone, will be beneficial to all of us.

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UNDER THE NORTHERN SKY

"Midnight Shine" lights up the coast

by Xavier Kataquapit

Attawapiskat resident Adrian Sutherland, an old friend of mine, and his fellow members of the band Midnight Shine recently launched a new First Nation music production. James Bay musicians have produced a lot of great music over the past few decades and Midnight Shine is part of a new crop of Aboriginal performers to add to this tradition.

Laughter and music has been two of the great tools of survival of First Nations. All my life, I have been surrounded by friends and family members who could sing, play the fiddle and step dance. The Scottish, Irish, French and English fur traders had a big impact on our culture when they introduced us to the fiddle. Of course, the drum always had a place in our music from the days of my ancestors and now happily it is being featured more and more with traditional drum groups all over the country.

Adrian and his younger brother Andrew have been part of several traditional drumming and singing groups for many years. Their family has always had a strong connection to Aboriginal culture and traditional activities. I know that Adrian has always loved music.

One of the mainstays of music in Aboriginal communities has always been Country and Western. I recall listening to so many country records, cassettes and then CDs over the years. Great country artists like George Jones, Patsy Cline, Johnny Cash, Hank Williams and Hank Snow were part of my experience as a child growing up in Attawapiskat. This type of music has influenced our communities on the James Bay coast over many decades and it was a starting point for many music performers in the north.

We had our own local musicians too with the Nakogee brothers, who have entertained us for decades at community events and dances. George Nakogee, one of the lead singers, is now better known for working as a show host for Wawatay Radio on the James Bay coast. There have been other music artists to come out of James Bay, such as Lawrence Martin, Vern Cheechoo, Archie Cheechoo and Ron Kataquapit.

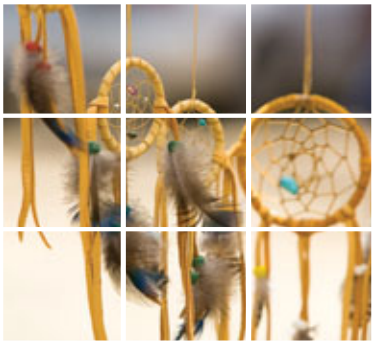
Adrian and his band, which includes drummer George Gillies, guitarist Zach Tomatuck and bassist Stan Louttit, have produced a wonderful album. Among my favourites are *James Bay* and *Indian In Disguise*. They describe the modern world my Aboriginal generation currently lives in, where we have one foot in the past and one foot in the present. Adrian wrote most of the songs on the album, while his sister Iris Sutherland revealed her writing talent on the song *Small Town Girl*. You can check out the band's music at www.midnightshineonline.com

I am so happy that Adrian is making his dreams come true. He has a great voice and the band is musically very tight. Recorded at Noble Street Studios in Toronto, the album was produced by Douglas Romanow and mastered by George Seara.

Adrian is a hard worker and he knows first-hand what it is to be an Anishinabe person in our modern world. He understands very well where he has come from and where he is going. The music world and life in the big city is uncompromising and there are lots of cracks and potholes on the highway to success. Alcohol and drugs are a big part of the music scene and Adrian will have to draw on his knowledge as a traditional person and his experience in the world of addictions to keep strong in his path.

It's great to see positive news coming out of Attawapiskat. Like many First Nations, my community has had to deal with so many issues over the past few decades. Adrian is proof that strong connections to our traditions and culture produce positive results.

Look for good things from Adrian Sutherland and Midnight Shine and support their efforts. We need more role models like Adrian and his band members.



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Cultural Manual for Foster and Adoptive parents of Aboriginal Children, launched at the last Gathering of the NETWORK on October 3... CHECK IT OUT! www.reseaumtlnetwork.com/eng/Portals/5/Cultural%20Manual.pdf

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Parents' Helpline: 1-800-361-5085
(www.parenthelpline.ca)

Missing Children's Network: They'll help you find kids who have run away or disappeared.
514-843-4333
(www.enfant-retourquebec.ca)

Drug Addiction help and reference: 1-800-265-2626
(www.drogue-aidereference.qc.ca)

Gambling Addiction help and reference: 1-800-265-2626 (www.info-reference.qc.ca)

S.O.S. Conjugal Violence:
1-800-363-9010
(www.sosviolenceconjugale.com)

Health and Sexuality Resources Center: 1-888-855-7432 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm) (www.criss.org)

Gay Helpline: 1-888-505-1010 (Monday to Friday, 8 am to 3 am and Saturday-Sunday, 11 am to 3 am)

The Native Women's Shelter of Montreal: 1-866-403-4688 (www.nwsm.info)

Suicide Action Québec:
1-866-277-3553
(www.suicide-quebec.net)

Residential School Survivors: A 24 hour toll-free crisis line is available to provide immediate emotional assistance and can be reached 24-hours a day, seven days a week: 1-866-925-4419. Other support services and information for survivors is available on the AFN website at: www.afn.ca/residentialschools/resources

Concordia University, Montreal:

The Centre for Native Education has changed its name to the Aboriginal Student Resource Centre (ASRC). The new name is inclusive of the First Nations, Inuit and Métis students the centre serves and recognizes its role as a resource for the Concordia community. For any further details contact: aboriginalcentre@concordia.ca or 514-848-2424 ext. 7327.

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Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou/Eenou Istchee)
Grand conseil des Cris (Eeyou/Eenou Istchee)

Have a Safe and Enjoyable Goose Break!

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Goose Break is a special time of the year, a time to go back to the land of our people to pursue and exercise a right that was fought hard by our great leaders. A right to hunt waterfowl, to feed our families, and to exercise our traditional customs like the “walking out ceremony.”

As we prepare our camps, and get our families ready for our annual spring hunt, we ask every Cree to take all precautions in their traditional camps to have a safe and a memorable hunt.

With the weather conditions changing rapidly, we ask all Crees to be extra cautious and to heed to the advice of “Nituuhuuchimaau.”

Have an enjoyable and safe Goose Break.

Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come
Deputy Grand Chief Ashley Iserhoff

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